

# **Reston Master Plan Special Study Writing Group Meeting Nicoson Meeting Notes**

**March 13, 2013**

## **Reston Association**

### **Attendees:**

**RMP SS Task Force Members:** John Carter, Van Foster, Dick Kennedy, Terry Maynard, Patty Nicoson, Joe Stowers, Matt Valentini

**Other:** Joe Kelly, David Lasso

Two major concerns were discussed at the meeting:

- The need to provide greatly improved access to the Wiehle-Reston East station on the south side through the Vornado property
- The need to get the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FC DOT)

**Matt Valentini** noted that both Fairfax County and Virginia DOT staff were still promoting suburban-car oriented standards for roads within and adjacent to his property, not urban standards.

The Reston Master-Plan Special Study Task Force Writing Group agreed to meet again on **Thursday, April 18, at 8:30 AM**. This would give task force members time to digest the transportation information that is scheduled to be provided at the March 26 and April 9 task force meetings.

### **Several upcoming meetings were noted:**

**March 14, 5:00 to 8:00 PM** at the Reston Community Center Hunters Woods. Washington at the Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Public Meeting on the Silver Line Extension and the bus

routes serving it.

**March 18, 7:30 PM.** North County government Center. Reston Planning and Zoning Committee. Heidi Merkel and Leonard Wolfenstein will provide an update on the Reston Master Plan Special Study

**March 20, 7 PM,** South Lakes High School. Fairfax County Presentation on the Soapstone Crossing.

**Achieving the Vision for Reston.** It was agreed that we would add the date that the document was approved by the Reston Master-Planned Special Study Task Force, which was February 26, 2013. At Kohann Williams request, we will also change the reference to the memorial sculpture garden on page 4. under ***Contributions the new community infrastructure and amenities*** to memorial garden of reflection. Kohann said the iPAR (Initiative for Public Art Reston) group planning it had changed the name to memorial garden of reflection.

The group also discussed its concerns about access from the south side of the Wiehle-Reston East Metrorail station. Patty Nicoson pointed out that language had been added to the "Achieving the Vision for Reston" document on page 4 under ***Contributions to expanding and maintaining paths for pedestrians and bicyclists***. It reads "Fairfax County should actively pursue ensuring public access from the south side of the Wiehle-Reston East station for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vehicle drop-off areas.

It was agreed that that **Patty Nicoson** would write a letter to Supervisor Cathy Hudgins to express the group's strong interest in seeing staff move quickly to meet with and work with Vornado, the property owner on the south side of the station to provide access to the station. A Vornado representative told Patty that the there had been no meetings recently to discuss access issues.

**Dick Kennedy** noted that this should be "low hanging fruit". He thought that about 45 spaces near the station could be reconfigured to provide for better access. Joe Stowers said that

Fairfax County staffer Chris Wells had been working on plans to provide pedestrian access but had not yet shared them with Vornado. Besides access, retail should be provided on the ground floor of the garage.

The group thought we should ask Cathy Hudgins could urge staff to address this issue as a priority.

The Comstock parking garage will be turned over to the Fairfax County in August. There is a structure on top of the parking platform for some rail-related retail. Work is moving forward on an apartment building for about 420 dwelling units.

Cathy Hudgins had announced at a recent meeting that she was seeking an additional \$2.2 million from Fairfax County for bus service in Reston.

**Patty Nicoson** mentioned that she had been given some travel times from Metro. The time to get from Wiehle station would be nine minutes to Spring Hill, 11 minutes to the Tysons Corner station, 21 minutes to East Falls Church, 33 minutes, to Rosslyn 40 minutes to the Metro Center 45 minutes to L'Enfant Plaza and 69 minutes to Largo 69.

Fares from Wiehle to Spring Hill would be \$2.95, rising to \$3.30 to the Tysons Corner station, \$5.30 to Ballston, and subsequently to \$5.75 at the Rosslyn station. This is the current cap for Metrorail fares, \$5.75. Dick Kennedy noted that if his family wanted to go downtown to team for a soccer game that would cost \$11.50 for each person and for a family of four more than \$40. They would be likely to drive to the District of Columbia. It was noted that parking at the National Stadium can cost \$40 and that traffic can be very congested making a vehicle trip very difficult.

## **Draft Comprehensive Plan Text**

**Terry Maynard** reviewed some of the issues the Reston Citizens Association (RCA) had identified in a letter to Heidi Merkel on the draft Comprehensive Plan text that was discussed at the Reston Master Plan Special Study Task Force Meeting on February 26.

One of these was the jobs/household projections. **John Carter** said that he did not trust the job/household numbers that were being talked about. What were the boundaries of the areas that the information was being collected for? TAZ or transportation analysis zones? Terry said that he had used the census numbers to develop his ratios.

RCA issues identified in a letter sent to Heidi Merkel on March 8 include: 1. Having a jobs/housing ration of 2.5:1; 2.assumptions used for office worker space; 3. Aggressive pursuit of air rights over the Dulles Corridor; and 4. Ensuring that the Reston community is on an equal footing with landowners in the Comprehensive Plan language.

Dick Kennedy had a paper that indicated the overall jobs per household balance in Reston was 3.6 for a population roughly 60,000 people 24,000 housing units.

Several people noted that the jobs number was changing because the amount of space per employee is decreasing, in some instances dramatically. The Reston analysis used 300 gross square feet per employee and 1200 square feet (SF) for a housing unit.

**Matt Valentino** said that the General Services Administration was using 240 SF per person and that it had a mandate to push this down. For Example, the Social Security Administration was likely to go from a 500,000 SF building to a 250,000 SF building with the same number of employees.

**John Carter** said that in Montgomery County they used a graduated number of 250 SF per person in the more urban areas of the county to 300 SF further north. Different jobs have different functional requirements. **Matt Valentini** noted that Living might have five people working at one table. We could see a lot of office compression if office space in Reston.

**Dick Kennedy** referred to a paper dated November 1, 2011, the jobs/housing ratio Reston-wide was 3.55 jobs per household. This assumes 87,000 jobs and 25,000 housing units. Did this include the Route 28 station? The group did not think that Reston

had 87,000 jobs.

**John Carter** said he thought people should not be getting exercised over the jobs/household ratio. He thought that Reston was doing probably much better in that regard. **Joe Stowers** noted that we were getting higher density residential replacing existing residential in some areas. It should make a difference

**Matt Valentini** noted that trends indicate that what is needed is a suburban retrofit. The financing environment is uncertain. The trend is to increase the number of residential units while office space is contracting.

Matt was concerned that if too much was asked of developers they might not redevelop. For example, there might not be enough incentive for Tishman Speyer and Brookfield to redevelop.

**John Carter** noted that not all of the commercial development would be class A office buildings. There will be other kinds of uses housing a number of different kinds of businesses. He noted that Montgomery County, they were getting high-end manufacturing. His intuitions suggest something like that may be happening in Virginia.

Joe Stowers said he also was concerned about the source of the data and its geography that was being used when discussing the job/household balance.

The group discussed the fact that the housing square footage was shrinking. **Dick Kennedy** said that Fairfax County is exploring constructing smaller housing units to help house the homeless and provide affordable housing. One concern of the supervisors is that any new regulations might encourage converting housing into more units. That impact needs to be studied.

**Matt Valentini** said that consumer preferences have changed for market rate housing. The younger demographic will accept smaller spaces if they are well located. JBG has a lot of experience with 2,000 housing units already built and 9,000

more under construction. The average size used to be 900 to 1000 SF. This now more like 720 SF. They are seeing in Toronto and a number of other places that people like to be in mixed-use neighborhoods, right near transit and are willing to give up space. They don't need a dining room. They might eat at an island and then go watch TV or work in their bedrooms. There is a dearth of that kind of product in the region.

**Dick Kennedy** thought there would be lots of this kind of housing built if it was well received. Now there are a lot more people working at home. Lifestyles have changed.

**Patty Nicoson** noted that there were other concerns voiced about the draft text. Some dealt with the requirement for consolidation of properties and the difficulty that poses for smaller properties and the special exception process.

**Dick Kennedy** noted that Heidi Merkel and Leonard Wolfenstein were going to speak to be Reston Planning and Zoning Committee on Monday, March 18 at 7:30 PM. He also said that the P & Z had considered the Chuck Veatch/Bozzuto midrise apartment structure of 421 units. He noted that they were asked to maintain a commitment to provide an option for ground floor retail uses longer.

There is still no news on the selection of the Lake Anne developer.

**Matt Valentini** talked about Reston Heights project, which had been approved by the Design Review Board and the Reston Planning and Zoning Committee. The original design had not been well received by the market. They redesigned it as mid-rise buildings consisting largely of residential with much better amenity base. It includes a retail plan and some grand places. The program calls for 675,000 SF of residential, 220,000 SF of office space and 145,000 SF of retail.

JBG has bought the Charter Oak Apartments. Kohann Williams said that she had first lived there 43 years ago when she first came to Reston. The rent had been \$300 per month.

JBG wants to make a strong pedestrian/bike connection and has planned a trail from Reston Heights all the way to Wiehle Avenue. They are having problems convincing the Virginia DOT and Fairfax County DOT to approve urban standards for roadways. They will have a roadway entering the project, which is on the east side of Reston Parkway. Vehicular access will be provided by the right in and right out road system similar to that across Reston Parkway

There will be a third lane on Reston Parkway heading north. JBG is trying to reengineer the existing plan and figure out how to get pedestrians safely across the parkway to the Reston Town Center Metrorail station.

**John Carter** noted they have similar problems in Montgomery County. It is difficult for pedestrians when you have to cross wide stretches of roadway.

It was agreed that the writing group would meet again on April 18 at 8:30 AM at the Reston Association.

Patty Nicoson